Montgomery Alabama Sept 14th 1837

To the Soc. of Enquiry

Dear Brethren

I have frequently thought of addressing you — And shall put it off no longer — I will endeavor to give you some information of the state of things in Alabama as far as my ~~information~~ knowledge extends — I may perhaps be able to add an item or two to your general stock of information respecting the social & religious aspects of our country —

From this place to Columbus Geo. it is about 100 miles, nearly East — From this place also to Pensacola, considerably west of South, it is near 160 or 70 miles — I dont know what the population of this large district is, but it must be very considerable, Then there is the whole of Florida South of Alabam — including I suppose nearly the whole of West Florida, what its population is I cant tell — Now, for all this large district — There is one presbyterian preacher at Irwinton about 100 miles S. E. of this on the Chatahoochy River — 35 miles this side of Irwinton there is a young Br. McCormick — a licentiate, about to settle as pastor over a small ch. in a colony, principally of North Carolinians — Many of them Scotch — There is perhaps a licentiate preaching somewhere between this & Pensacola — I know not ~~that~~ whether there is a presbyterian preacher in all west Florida — I believe a ch. was lately organized in Pensacola — Much of this district in alabama is the country lately yielded by, or rather forced from the Creek Indians

The fluctuating nature of the population in the richer parts of this state seems to render the effort almost hopeless of getting a permanent hold for the gospel institutions among them — For instance in a neighborhood 10 miles from this where there was perhaps the largest church in all S. alabama there are not now perhaps 10 members left, by death & emigration — May your beloved Society prosper — & may its members ponder the claims of the destitute, every where

Yr Brother
Wm G. Allen

in wh. there is much good land and rapidly filling up -

I returned yesterday from a week's excursion to the S.E. - 70 or 80 miles - during wh. I visited the N. Carolina colony spoken of above - Attended a communion season with another brother from below this, who had been appointed by presbytery to attend it - The meeting lasted 4 days - The people in that region (it is not in the late creek country - but a little south of it) seems to be settling there to live permanently, and not merely to make fortunes, as is generally the case where the lands are richer, but more sickly - In this latter case the desire of gain appears to absorb every other interest - Hence selfishness & a marked neglect of all the means of moral & religious & social & political + domestic improvement, are strongly developed in such communities - far more so than I have ever seen elsewhere - But where the people settle on lands that are less rich, as in the region I have lately visited, there is more health expected - And a deeper interest manifested in securing the advantages of schools and churches - And God seems to be pointing to them, as the stay of this country if it is to be preserved at all to the white man - Instead of the meagre, ague stricken adults, and wretched ash faced looking children which you so frequently meet with in the more fertile prairies - you meet in these less fertile, but better watered & more undulating parts indications of health far more encouraging - In fact I never saw finer looking children, ~~and~~ nor more of them among the same number of people, than I saw last sabbath at the church on Pea River, Barbour County -

As I went out, & as I returned I preached at Monticello, a small village on the road, where I think nearly all the people in it came out -

I doubt not it was the first time that many of them ever heard a presbyterian preach – There are two presbyterian families in this place – and 2 or 3 others 7 or 8 miles from it – And I suppose they are scattered in this way through all that large district of new Country I have described & wh. might form little nuclei around wh. many congregations might be gathered, and Churches established, were there men to undertake & prosecute the work –

At the meeting I attended, 3 persons united upon profession of their faith – and 10 or 12 upon Certificate – In all I suppose there are 30 members now in that Church, which, from the Character of the materials composing it, and the community around, it may be hoped will constitute a sort of metropolitan Ch. or focus of presbyterian and evangelical influence for a large region round about it –

In this place, and as far as I can learn, in all the larger towns in the State, at least in the southern part of it, but few even of the professors of religion are willing to attend Church more than once a week – They will go on sabbath morning, but it must be some novelty that will bring them out in the afternoon or evening – I found this the case in Augusta, & Macon, & Columbus Geo. The effect of this must be bad on the habits of preparation especially in young sermonizers – There seems to be a sort of pervading reluctance among the upper classes of what is more properly the southern population, to attend more than one service a week – tis not so much so with that, from the north – But even in that there is too often a gradual decline to the same negligence of the means of grace –

Universalism has taken a pretty firm hold in many places in this state – In this town they have a church, i.e. a building – but little preaching – Even those who hold that faith care but little for hearing it preached

But I am told that in some of the newer settlements, it finds zealous propagators by preaching & the circulation of its pernicious publications –

The catholics have a neat chapel in this place, but it has been opened but seldom since I have been here – There are only a very few of that Ch. in the town or neighborhood, and none that I know of who are persons of influence –

The Society of Inquiry
in the
Theological Seminary
Princeton
N. Jersey

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The Baptists are strong in numbers throughout the state and in some places are making accessions – But I think that in many neighborhoods the Methodists are the only preachers who are heard to publish the gospel – Their system is an admirable one for the new & feeble settlements – Between this & the place where I was last sabbath, they have places for preaching in 6 or 7 neighborhoods regularly once a month at least. I preach once in two weeks 16 miles from town, where there are a few presbyt. there was once a flourishing little ch. among them – but they are scattered – they have the walls of a house up & covered, but no floor except the ground – Some come in ox carts & waggons, one family 6 miles in this way – There is some encouragement to preach to such peoples –